

## TESTIMONY NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST

L.D. 2001

### AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES ADVISORY COUNCIL AND REQUIRE FUNDING FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Victoria Wallack, Director of Communications and Government Relations at Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association neither for nor against L.D. 2001.

Education law in Title 20-A, §4706 already requires the instruction in African American studies, and we heartily support this. These studies must be included in the review of content standards and performance indicators as part of the system of the Maine Learning Results. This bill would provide additional funding to support African American studies.

The African American Studies Advisory Council is a very large body and will require a great deal of collaboration and coordination to get the work done as outlined within the proposed bill. Within the duties specified for the Council, letter E. will become an onerous task, not only for the Council and the Department of Education, but also for local districts. Letter E. reads “work with the department to develop a process to support and enable a school administrative unit to conduct an internal audit of that school administrative unit’s curriculum to ensure an equitable representation of African American voices and an accurate historical account of African American history and culture. Audits conducted pursuant to this paragraph must occur at least once every 2 years.” We understand from testimony heard on bills related to Wabanaki studies that some school districts in the state have been slow to develop, implement and monitor the quantity and quality of African American studies within the curriculum. We appreciate the desire to see these efforts be increased. Letter F. requires an annual report to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs regarding the progress of the implementation and status of the curriculum audits.

Beyond the work expected of the Council, and of the districts, the bill requests funding for teacher education programs as well as funding for teacher professional development in African American studies.

While this may be a necessary and heavy lift, the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and the Maine School Superintendents Association are neither for nor against L.D. 2001 because similar to other curriculum mandate proposals we believe this should go through the curriculum review process. We should use that process to evaluate what we are doing and what still needs to be done to improve our instruction.